

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY  
NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES: SECURITY ISSUES FOR THE TWENTY-  
FIRST CENTURY**

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**INTRODUCTION**

As a strongly democratic developing nation, exercising great influence on its South American neighbors and increasing influence in the international arena, Brazil is one of the most

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geostrategically important countries in South America. It is the third largest country in the American hemisphere with an enormous wealth of natural resources, including the world's largest rainforest, and has the potential to become a global economic powerhouse.<sup>[1]</sup> To achieve this, Brazil must overcome the challenges posed by its rapidly growing population, and provide for environmentally friendly, sustainable development, while avoiding economic and political instabilities. Given the enormous potential of Brazil as a constructive participant in the global community, it is clearly in the United States' interest to help them succeed.

## CONTEXT

### Geography

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, occupying approximately half of the South American continent. Its Atlantic Ocean coastline stretches for 4,600 miles. The country contains the bulk of the Amazon Basin with the largest river system in the world. Excluding Chile and Ecuador, it shares borders with ten of the twelve other South American nations: Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana.<sup>[2]</sup>

With the exception of Columbia, Brazil has cordial diplomatic relations with its contiguous neighbors. Brazil's Amazon jungle border with Columbia poses serious challenges from Columbia's narcotics trade. Brazil has been forced to implement strong policing and surveillance programs to maintain sovereignty and control over these jungle territories.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Political

A federative republic, Brazil has overcome half a century of isolationist government, in which military intervention has been a continuing problem. However, the recent election of President Fernando Cardoso for an unprecedented second four-year term in 1998 is indicative of Brazil's

stabilizing political situation. Cardoso is a progressive president whose popularity is based on his ability to control inflation (currently less than seven percent), sustain economic growth and provide economic stability. Cardoso has made significant progress in pushing through numerous reforms such as privatization of government-owned services agencies, equal treatment for foreign-controlled companies, creation of agencies to manage telecommunications and petroleum sectors, progressive social security reforms and mandatory fiscal responsibility bills.

There are, however, lingering weaknesses in the political system, as a result of a Congress composed of 18 political parties and an electoral system in which each state forms a single constituency. As a result, Congressmen tend to be extremely provincial, considering issues in terms of the impact on their particular region.<sup>[4]</sup> This cumbersome and parochial system makes it difficult to achieve the mandates needed for further important reforms of the tax and political systems.

Nonetheless, President Cardoso has successfully raised Brazil's international profile and increased Brazil's leadership in regional trade and political alliances. On January 1, 2000, Brazil finished serving a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council; Cardoso has lobbied for Brazil to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. In addition, Brazil plays an influential role in the Organization of American States (OAS), the Amazon Pact, and the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), and is a party to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.

Cardoso has sought to increase Brazil's engagement and cooperation with the United States through many high-level visits at the presidential and cabinet level.<sup>[5]</sup> As journalist Stephen Buckley noted: "Whether it is Cardoso's popularity on the international stage, Brazil's economic

leadership among developing nations or the country's emergence as the strongest diplomatic voice in its region...the country...(can) at last shake off its reputation as an underachieving behemoth that, according to a famous insult, "has a great future, and always will."”<sup>[6]</sup>

## **Social/Cultural**

Brazil is the most populous South American country, ranking sixth in world population.<sup>[7]</sup> The country is undergoing a profound social transition characterized by rural migration (only 20% living in rural areas), the entrance of women into the labor market, and the spread of health information and services, all resulting in a markedly declining population growth rate. This low growth rate of close to one percent is already having the positive result of enabling a larger number of people to improve their social status, a rate of change that is among the highest in the world. Brazil’s low inflation and unemployment rates, coupled with a growing economy and an almost 100% access to basic education, combine to produce further positive social changes.<sup>[8]</sup>

## **Economy**

As a result of eschewing import-substituting industrialization (ISI) and embracing open markets, privatization and direct foreign investment, Brazil is not only South America’s largest economy, but is a rapidly developing global economy with the United States its largest customer.<sup>[9]</sup> Mercosur, a regional trade pact with Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay as members and Chile and Bolivia as associate members, is a key factor in further development of Brazil and the region.

In addition, Brazil is instituting many stringent fiscal and structural policy changes. Brazil has outpaced International Monetary Fund targets and reassured investors by maintaining tight fiscal and monetary policy. Brazil is privatizing its industries and has already made rapid progress in the telecommunications industry with privatization of its national telephone

industry, followed by key investor acquisition of cellular transmission licenses.[\[10\]](#)

## **Military**

Although Brazil maintains good relations with neighboring countries and foresees no external threat, Brazil has the largest armed forces in the region, composed of a Brazilian Army, Brazilian Navy (includes naval air and marines), Brazilian Air Force, and Federal Police (paramilitary). Brazil's military expenditure as a percent of GDP was 1.9% in FY 99.[\[11\]](#) In 1999 the Brazilian military totaled 291,100, consisting of an army of 189,000, a navy of 52,000 and an air force of 50,000 (no figures available for the paramilitary).[\[12\]](#)

## **International Issues: Disarmament and Non-Proliferation**

Brazil's Constitution prohibits any use of nuclear energy for purposes other than peaceful ones. Brazil has been extremely active in disarmament and non-proliferation issues, adhering to the Treaty for the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), among others. Brazil is a member of the Nuclear Suppliers, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons.[\[13\]](#)

## **International Issues: Human Rights**

Since Brazil's transition to democracy in 1985 from an authoritarian government, the country has made enormous progress on issues of human rights. Brazil's Constitution of 1998 institutionalized public policies for the protection and promotion of human rights and opened up opportunities for movements for the defense of the rights of women, blacks, Indians and rural workers. Brazil is a signatory to the principal international treaties on human rights, including the International Agreement on Civil and Political Rights; the International

Agreement on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment or Treatment; and the American Convention on Human Rights.<sup>[14]</sup>

### **International Issue: Drug Trafficking**

Brazil participates actively in the work of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and also the Inter-American Commission on the Control of Drug Abuse of the Organization of American States (OAS).<sup>[15]</sup> Because Brazil is a transshipment country for illegal Bolivian, Colombian and Peruvian cocaine destined for the U.S. and Europe, primarily through the Brazilian Amazon, one of the government's main political concerns in regional relations is preventing Colombia's violence and drug trade from spilling over into Brazil.<sup>[16]</sup>

### **International Issue: The Environment**

Deforestation and other rapacious development policies in the Amazon have seriously negative global eco-system effects and pose a real challenge to Brazil to combine resource development with ecological concerns. Brazil is meeting this challenge primarily through newly instituted sustainable development practices, environmental crime bills, and programs such as SIVAM (System for Monitoring the Amazon), a surveillance system being built in the Amazon.<sup>[17]</sup>

## **INTERESTS**

The primary U.S. national interest in Brazil is one of facilitating national political stability based on continued economic development and strengthened democratic institutions. In a report from the Council on Foreign Relations, the reasons Brazil should be even more important to the U.S. are clearly laid out: "In sum, Brazil is the essential partner for the United States in South America. It is in the interest of both our great nations to work together, to explore points of common interest, and to resolve outstanding

differences in a frank and forward-looking manner...In an increasingly diverse and differentiated region, the United States cannot act on all fronts simultaneously if it wishes to successfully promote and sustain strong democracies, freer trade, economic reforms, and growth, and to tackle the drug problem.”[\[18\]](#)

Current U.S. policy toward Brazil is reflected in remarks by U.S. Ambassador Anthony S. Harrington: “The U.S. desire to strengthen democratic institutions throughout the Americas has been shared by Republican and Democratic administrations for decades.” Only a decade ago, military governments were common in the Americas. Now, 34 of 35 nations are democracies. The U.S. believes that bringing prosperity to all Americans through free and fair trade is a common interest for both nations.[\[19\]](#) U.S. regional interests, including suppression of the drug trade, are furthered by a stable, prosperous Brazil. The U.S. believes that drug-traffickers and international criminals constitute a great security threat to regional stability and economic growth.[\[20\]](#)

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

### **Economic Opportunities and Challenges**

Economic opportunities for the U.S. have never been better in Brazil. U.S. investment and trade volume make Brazil one of our most important trading partners. As Ambassador Harrington has stated it: “Brazil and the United States are better partners than at any time in history.” U.S. direct investment in Brazil, \$35 billion last year alone, is greater than what the U.S. has in Mexico, one of our closest neighbors, and is five times what is invested in China. Of the Fortune 500 companies, over 400 are invested in Brazil.[\[21\]](#)

Not only is U.S. investment great for Brazil, in addition, the trade volume between the countries is producing new jobs and economic growth. Last year Brazil’s imports to the U.S.



were nearly twice the size of the export growth to the rest of the world. Even so, bilateral trade issues still remain. Brazil's average tariff of 14% is far greater than the U.S. average tariff of just under 3%. Other areas of concern include protection of intellectual property, an issue before a WTO dispute resolution panel, and implementation of a bilateral tax treaty.[\[22\]](#)

### **Economics: U.S. Policy**

U.S. economic policy reflects great commitment to resolving economic issues and fostering mutual investment and trade opportunities. In 1995, the U.S.-Brazil Bilateral Trade Review was completed, laying the foundation for closer cooperation in resolving bilateral trade issues. The Review also laid the groundwork for progress toward a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and closer ties between NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association) and Mercosur, the Common Market of the South. Brazil is a leader in regional efforts to negotiate an FTAA by 2005.[\[23\]](#)

This important effort will continue, as stated by Ambassador Harrington: "...Free trade reflects American values and vision. The FTAA can prepare our hemisphere for the new economy, opening the doors of free trade to an integrated market of 800 million people, with over \$10 trillion in GDP. That is our future. A future as close, strong and prosperous partners in the Americas."[\[24\]](#)

### **Economics: Brazil's Perspective**

The FTAA issue has caused some conflict between the two nations because Brazil has preferred to negotiate not as an individual nation but as a member of Mercosur.[\[25\]](#) Generally, however, Brazil's perspective on how to increase its economic viability very closely mirrors that of the U.S. President Cardoso has sought to establish long-term stability and growth, to reduce Brazil's extreme socioeconomic imbalances and to open the Brazilian economy to greater

foreign participation.<sup>[26]</sup> Brazil believes the two countries have strongly connected interests: “Since 1993 the Brazilian government has succeeded in putting together four elements that previously were never successfully integrated: democracy, low inflation, an open market, and economic growth. The consequences of this synergy have made the relationship between Brazil and the U.S. even stronger as each country looks to the other as a valued business partner.”<sup>[27]</sup>

## **Political Policy**

Brazil is a good political ally for the U.S. Political interests and policy coincide remarkably, especially since President Cardoso took office in 1995. Brazil has traditionally played a strong leadership role in the inter-American community for collective security, dating back to its alignment with the allies in both World Wars. Brazil is increasingly active in the international community beyond the Western Hemisphere as a charter member of the United Nations, contributing troops to UN peacekeeping efforts in the Middle East, the former Belgian Congo, Cyprus, Mozambique, and most significantly, Angola. Along with Argentina, Chile, and the United States, Brazil is one of the guarantors of the Peru-Ecuador peace process.<sup>[28]</sup> With the U.S., Brazil has bilateral treaties covering a wide range of international relations, such as “extradition, a joint participation agreement on communication satellites and scientific cooperation, civil aviation, and maritime agreements.”<sup>[29]</sup>

## **Military: U.S. Policy on Threats and Opportunities**

While Brazil may have no enemies in the conventional sense, its military is important in other ways that coincide closely with American military policy in the region. Increasingly, many security challenges are transnational in nature, requiring close cooperation to address issues such as drug trafficking threats. American forces assigned to U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), the regional unified combatant command, support U.S. and allied nations’

law enforcement agencies for counter-drug operations, joint and bilateral/multilateral exercises focusing on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, and other foreign military interaction (military-to-military contact) programs.<sup>[30]</sup> A new Department of Defense school, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, complements programs at the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, the Marshall Center in Europe, the Asia Pacific Defense Center, and the Inter-American Defense College. These organizations “focus on helping to strengthen democracy by fostering military subordination to civilian leadership, respect for human rights, and effective management of scarce defense resources, not to mention enhancing leadership and other skills that mark truly professional military forces in democratic societies.”<sup>[31]</sup>

### **Military: Brazil Perspective**

Drug-traffickers from surrounding nations, especially Columbia, are an especially large and pressing concern of the U.S. and Brazil, and both countries cooperate in counter narcotics efforts. As stated by Brazilian Ambassador Luiz Felipe Lampreia: “Drug trafficking and organized crime are issues that affect, in different forms, all regions of the world.”<sup>[32]</sup> Brazil has several programs aimed at gaining control of lawless regions of the Amazon. “*Plan Cobra*,” a security operation along its 1,000 mile-long border with Colombia, is a program to ensure a U.S.-backed anti-drug plan in Colombia (*Plan Columbia*) doesn't send refugees or fighting spilling across the border.<sup>[33]</sup> “*ProAmazonia*,” a \$435 million program, will send police fanning out across the 1.9 million square miles (five million square km) of the Brazilian Amazon.<sup>[34]</sup>

The largest and most far-reaching plan, SIVAM (a Portuguese synonym for System for Monitoring the Amazon), is a \$1.4 billion project being built by the U.S. aerospace and defense

firm Raytheon that will stretch a surveillance network of high-tech radars across the Amazon. Brazil is hoping SIVAM can help address the dual problems of drug trade and environmental crime, and most importantly, maintain its sovereignty in the vast Amazon.[\[35\]](#)

While Brazil has no enemies in the conventional sense, its National Defense Policy is aimed at maintaining “a defense system adequate to safeguard the Nation's sovereignty, democracy and the rule of law...and integrates the strategic aims in the social, economic, military and diplomatic spheres.” Brazil’s National Defense objectives reflect this policy and are in consonance with U.S. policy in the region:

- “a. to guarantee sovereignty while preserving the Nation's territorial integrity, heritage and interests;*
- b. to guarantee the rule of law and democratic institutions;*
- c. to maintain the Nation's cohesion and unity;*
- d. to protect individuals, goods and resources that are Brazilian, or under Brazilian jurisdiction;*
- e. to achieve and maintain Brazilian interests abroad;*
- f. to give Brazil a significant role in international affairs and a greater role in the international decision-making process; and*
- g. to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.”[\[36\]](#)*

## **Cultural Opportunities and Policy**

The U.S. and Brazil share many cultural similarities. Immigration in both countries has resulted in populations of many races. Both countries have set aside areas for indigenous Indian populations. Interracial issues are challenging for both countries, though Brazil’s social history for interracial issues is not as conflicted and violent as that of the U.S. Both populations are highly mobile and primarily urban. Both countries are heavily involved in technological change and innovation. The two countries are the top Internet users in the world. Most importantly, social mobility in both countries is possible through talent, education and hard

work.<sup>[37]</sup>

Cultural opportunities between the two countries reflect these shared interests. In the International Space Station (ISS) Program, Brazil will contribute hardware and research facilities in exchange for one flight opportunity for a Brazilian astronaut.<sup>[38]</sup> The Education Partnership Agreement is involved in standards-based education reform, use of technology and professional development of teachers.<sup>[39]</sup>

## STRATEGY

In general, U.S. strategy toward Brazil must continue to be one of cooperative engagement encompassing a broad range of diplomatic, economic and cultural initiatives. Therefore, current U.S. strategy is to continue its current policies of achieving open markets and suppressing illicit drug trade from Columbia in order to promote democracy, stability and collective approaches to threats to regional security. One of the primary ways to support Brazil and other regional nations in achieving open and global competitive markets is to continue the Free Trade Area of the Americas process to establish a hemisphere-wide free-trade zone by the target date of 2005. President Bush has already pledged to seek “fast-track” authority for the Free Trade Area of the Americas process.<sup>[40]</sup> The primary risks are short-term loss of jobs due to restructuring toward a more service-oriented economy. The long-term risks include deleterious effects to the environment of Brazil and possibly the world, discussed further below.

The National Drug Control Strategy supports participating nations’ requests for training and operational support, equipment, technological advice and maintenance support to the nations’ counter-drug organizations. Agencies involved include the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Department of Justice, U.S. Customs Service and USSOUTHCOM.<sup>[41]</sup> This strategy as stated carries relatively low risk, both for regional

countries and for the U.S., and is an effective means of enabling the region to address these issues as a concerted effort by all the countries concerned.

However, U.S. initiatives such as *Plan Columbia* are not universally regarded as an effective strategy for pursuing counter-narcotics efforts by the U.S. This plan carries substantial risks for the U.S., Columbia and adjacent countries such as Brazil. There is the possibility of escalating U.S. military presence and involvement in a Vietnam-like scenario, probably not a very high risk given American fear of such a scenario. Other substantial and real risks include a high probability of increased fighting among the various factions in Columbia resulting in a large influx of refugees, narco-trafficking and violence into surrounding regions such as the Brazilian Amazon.

One scenario occurring already and sure to increase with *Plan Columbia* is a displacement of narcotics operations into the Brazilian Amazon. Brazil already recognizes this risk and is taking expensive measures to deflect this threat to its territory. These economic resources could be better spent on social programs, such as increasing secondary educational opportunities, or environmental programs, for example. Many leaders in the region believe the U.S. should exert more effort to counter the illegal narcotics industry by decreasing demand for illicit drugs at the source in America, vice trying to control it at the supply point in other countries. This strategy would incur less risk for both other countries and the U.S., and would require a U.S. cultural and political change in favor of pursuing a long-range solution vice a quick fix.

All of these strategies are relatively short sighted, and fail to account for some very real challenges Brazil faces now that have potential negative consequences not only for the U.S., but also for the world. The primary challenge for Brazil is how to continue as a developing nation to use its wealth of resources, without environmentally destroying its unique Amazon Basin. Few can argue that deforestation, water pollution and disappearance of plant and animal species

have far-ranging negative effects. Debate has raged for years on the validity of scientific theories about the negative consequences for the global environment, particularly in regards to the phenomenon of global warming. There is little debate now that this trend is real and is increasing and is very likely related to the increasing destruction of the world's jungle forests, particularly with regard to the burning of fossil fuels.[\[42\]](#)

This type of problem is shared by other developing nations with undeveloped land resources. Perhaps none are as poised as Brazil is to take those steps necessary to address these issues internally, regionally and internationally, as a fast-tracking developing nation with full representation at the highest levels of international policy and decision-making. U.S strategy should look beyond the next couple of decades to address these very tough issues in a manner that is inclusive, cooperative and approached from a multilateral perspective. U.S. strategy should address the serious risks to future generations posed by these issues by supporting efforts of developing nations such as Brazil. Strategies should include sustaining development without destroying natural resources, increasing energy resources through renewable energy vice fossil fuel energy, and sharing key scientific and technical knowledge to fight modern scourges, such as AIDS, for example.

Already Brazil is showing that it is a leader in addressing seemingly impossible issues such as the rapid spread of AIDS in developing countries. Decisive governmental action spurred by a demanding Brazilian public has resulted in a very innovative program to address both the spread and treatment of AIDS, in a cost-effective program that is comparable to any program in the U.S. This program is a potential model for developing nations around the world to address this threat.[\[43\]](#)

## CONCLUSION

Brazil has made significant strides in the last decade toward becoming an international leader. With its enormous natural resources and large, relatively young population, it has significant potential to become a truly global power. The U.S. should work to strengthen this ascendancy, helping Brazil realize its political and economic goals and become a constructive member of the global community. “Brazil...can and should be a crucial player with the United States in promoting economic reform and free trade, in sustaining democracy and open markets, and in combating narcotics, terrorism, and trans-regional crime. The United States cannot act alone in South America, and there is no better strategic partner than Brazil in tackling these problems...Brazil is too important to everything that is going to happen in South America for a policy of benign neglect.”[\[44\]](#)

## ANNEX

### Political Questions

1. With regard to the Columbian narcotics problems, what is Brazil’s strategy other than its current border surveillance efforts, especially with regard to diplomatic efforts with Columbia and the U.S. on the Plan Columbia project?
2. There has been some talk of changing the electoral system in order to make politicians more accountable to their electors and parties. The government supports fewer parties to make them more cohesive and a different electoral system than the one currently in place in which each state forms a single constituency disputed by several hundred candidates. Are any efforts now being undertaken by Mr. Cardoso’s administration to implement such changes?
3. The judicial system is widely believed to be highly inefficient, with too few judges and a cumbersome process slowing down the administration of justice. What reforms are currently



being considered?

## **Military Questions**

1. The Ministry of Defense is a very new organization tasked by law to build a truly “joint” structure in the Brazilian military forces. What has happened since its formation and what are the plans to integrate the military forces into a cohesive joint organization?
2. Brazil’s military has begun a downsizing and modernization process. What is the goal of this process, what changes will occur in the different forces, and will this affect the mission of the forces, i.e., will more emphasis be placed on Amazonian Basin issues of sovereignty and counter-narcotics efforts?
3. The U.S. has several programs in place to foster military to military contact in the region, including the new Western Hemisphere for Security Cooperation Institute. How much does Brazil’s military participate in these institutions and are there any plans to increase this contact?
4. Does Brazil plan to continue to participate in U.N. peacekeeping efforts, and at what level of participation?
5. What exactly are the processes and equipments in place to monitor the border, especially with regard to the border with Columbia? If penetration by Columbian illegal forces is detected, what are the legal and military actions that the Brazilian border forces can take?

## **Economic Questions**

1. The tax system has undergone several efforts in the last couple of years to simplify it by combining federal, state and municipal taxes into one broad tax, among other reforms. What is the status of this reform effort?
2. Intellectual property issues have been a point of contention between the U.S. and Brazil. What is the current status of Brazilian policy on this issue?
3. What is the current status of efforts to develop a bilateral tax treaty between the U.S. and

Brazil?

4. The FTAA process has caused some conflict between the two nations because Brazil has preferred to negotiate not as an individual nation but as a member of Mercosur. If this policy begins to derail the FTAA process for Brazil due to the inability of other Mercosur countries to fully participate in a timely fashion, will Brazil abandon this policy and continue with the FTAA process itself?

## Cultural Questions

1. What are the cultural issues that come between closer relations between the two nations? For example, Brazil is the only Portuguese speaking nation in the Western Hemisphere—does this cause problems?
2. Brazil has made great progress in reducing its population growth rate. What was the government policy that made this happen and what is current government policy on this issue?
3. Brazil has five distinct geographic regions. Does this cause significant cultural disparity? Are there other significant factors that cause significant cultural disparity? What infrastructure capabilities help to create cultural cohesion? For example, Brazil is second in the world in cell phone use and Internet use—are these technological innovations causing a leapfrog effect in technological infrastructure?

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